

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 4, 1964

FOIAb3b

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE INCENTIVE AWARDS CEREMONY
CONSTITUTION HALL

(AS ACTUALLY DELIVERED AT 11:52 AM EST)

Director Gordon, Chairman Macy, Members of the
Cabinet, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is an opportunity that I welcome. A President's day is never long enough for all the things that he might like to do. I would like to get out and meet with the people who work with me. I would like to see more of the men and women who are in charge of the bureaus. I would like to just sit and talk with them, listen to their ideas, perhaps get them to listen to some of mine. I should like to meet with employees, to discuss ways to keep government service alert and proud. I so much want our government service to be strong. I want it to have those qualities that make this a great and a decent country. I want it to be compassionate. I want it to be human, yet free of venality. I want it never to take itself for granted because that is the mark of a bad servant. An unmistakable sign of integrity in government is a sense of responsibility to the taxpayers.

I have said I believe in the tight fist and the open mind -- a tight fist with money and an open mind to the needs of America. I want us to keep up with the times, but keep our feet on the ground. I want that same state of mind to prevail in every Department and in every bureau of this government.

I expect to find it at every level of responsibility, from Cabinet members down to the newest and the youngest recruit. I want every supervisor to remember that your example is really what determines the attitudes of the men and the women who work with you. You are the officers of the line who lead the way and bear the burden and the responsibility. A man will sometimes think that because his rank is modest he is insignificant in the great scheme of things. But I have read what Nehru said as he worked with his colleagues and the British Ambassador on plans for a free India:

"You know, we are small men and unimportant.
But the cause in which we work is great -- and some
of that greatness touches each of us."

That is the whole spirit of the public service with which I have been so proud to have been associated all of my adult life. When I became your President one year ago, I assigned top priority to efficiency and economy in government. I pledged that we would root out waste and inefficiency wherever we found it. I believe we

MORE

(OVER)

Page 2

have made good on that pledge. I believe we have the people's confidence in our sincerity. But we must continue to earn that confidence. Controlling waste is somewhat like bailing a boat: You have to keep at it. I have no intention of easing up on my insistence on getting a dollar of value for each dollar we spend.

Economy once in a while is just not enough. We have our work cut out for us in the years ahead. I have asked all Americans to join in creating the Great Society. The abundance of this great land must be put to work for the benefit of all of our people. We must eliminate poverty. We must wipe out discrimination. We must provide education and employment opportunities. We must help to create great cities. We must conserve the land and the open spaces, and we must serve all of our people all the time.

I do not think that any of this is beyond the reach of a purposeful and a resourceful people.

Theodore Roosevelt said that the President must be steward of all the people. So government will play its proper part in this important work, and we cannot advance if our way is blocked with the debris of inefficiency or obsolescence, or downright waste. We can afford only the essential. Whatever fails to meet that test must be put aside. This is why we are closing defense installations that we no longer need. This is why I have ordered every Department to install a cost reduction program patterned after the biggest Department in terms of employees -- the Defense Department -- and in terms of budget. This is why I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to stop spending scarce dollars on programs and services which have outlived their day.

We are going to put "thrift" back in the dictionary. As President, I can, and I will, make the major decisions on holding total spending to the rock bottom. But most of the opportunities to increase efficiency and to find less costly ways to do business occur in the work that you do every day. And here is where I just must look to you and rely on you, because no one person can do this.

I want your help. I want every supervisor, I want every employee, to continually ask themselves two questions: What is it costing to do this work? Is there a way to do it as well or better that would cost less?

I want you to think of your bureau or your unit as though it were your own little private business. Would you have as many employees on your personal payroll? Would you be willing to write them checks every two weeks, the same amount that you are writing them with Uncle Sam's name signed? If they were working for you, would they be producing more? Could you make a profit with the practices that you are following? Where would you start to cut expenses if you didn't?

After all, really this is your business. You are the ones that are supporting it with your deducts, with your

MORE

Page 3

taxes, and you ought to be concerned with it. This is what a manager is there to do, and it is why I like to see tough-minded but fair people come into government, with business experience. They are accustomed to market competition where quality and low unit costs make the difference between swimming and sinking. They can bring that state of mind to the management of the public's business. Where they do, everybody benefits.

But I am convinced that we have career managers in government who are just as good as any managers in private business. I see evidence of this every day as our cost reduction program produces improvements and savings. And what I want you to understand this morning is that these talents must now be put to work at full capacity.

I am asking for your help. I am asking for your cooperation. I am asking for your very best effort. And you will have the gratitude of your country and the gratitude of your President.

Today we observe the 10th year of the Incentive Awards Program. We honor the government employees who have been diligent in seeking ways to reduce costs, and diligent in increasing efficiency. This Program has achieved much. In a single year it produced 118,500 employee suggestions which were adopted. Its potential is vast.

Now I want to see another new record set in the coming 12 months. I have faith in you and I trust you, and I believe in you. Therefore, I just know you will do it.

Thank you very much.

END

(12:03 PM EST)